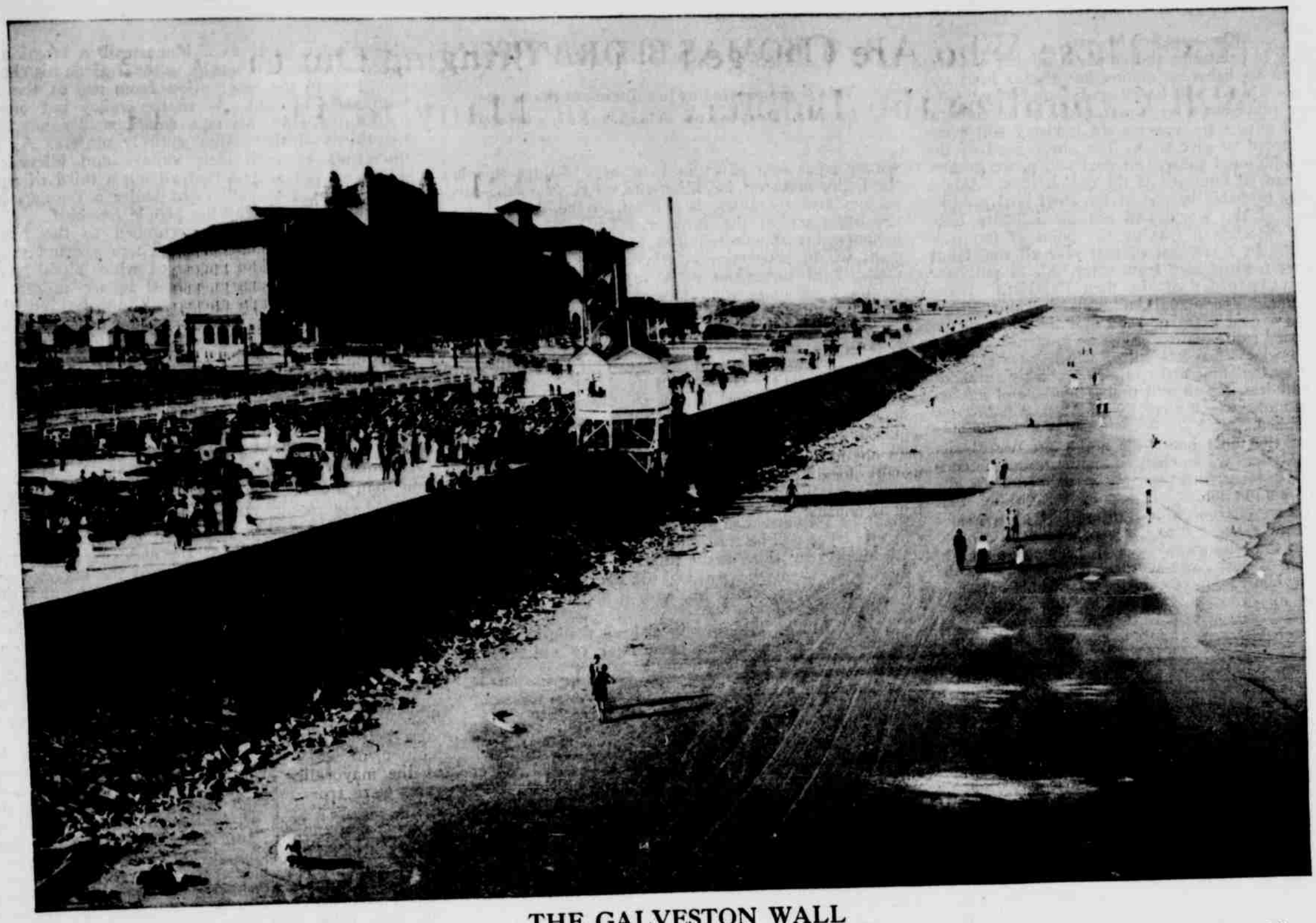

## THE GALVESTON WALL

After Galveston, Texas, was nearly wiped off the map by the great tidal wave brought by the storm, a new sea wall was built. It is one of the world's wonders. Along this wall is one of the finest beaches in the world. Hotels have sprung up along this wall until now the place gives promise of being to that section of the country what Atlantic City is to the Middle Atlantic States.

# *The Truth—and After-War History*

PROVERBS and epigrams wear the same clothes but differ widely in character. A proverb is for everyday wear, while an epigram is for days of idleness and ornament. Peasants perpetuate proverbs, while epigrams belong in the salon and club. Epigrams are like their makers, clever, cruel and cold; a proverb is not always clever, nor does it have to be; but invariably it does embody a moral summary of human experience.

You probably don't know who first said "Honesty Is the Best Policy" or "Murder Will Out," and it doesn't matter anyway. But you know that however commonplace, however trite, there is a fundamental morality at the bottom of them, and that they too contain a truth founded on experience.

So it is with international problems today and the relation of the United States to them. The key to this exhibit of proverbs is President Wilson.

In the first place, here's a fact to tuck away in your brain. All the world may not love the United States; some of the world may mistrust the United States; but all the world from Pekin to Popocatapetl and from Alaska to the antarctic does most certainly respect the United States and its opinion.

This is an important fact because, according to all expectations, with the necessary co-operation of war removed, there was to be a general cold-shouldering of the independent, wealthy and dominant United States. Disillusionment of the European and Asiatic powers, regarding Wilson ideals as reflected in the failure of this or that point, was to make the United States a very unpopular nation with the disappointed minorities.

You heard Americans say that Wilson was a child among experienced statesmen at Paris; that the Americans were out-talked and out-played, and all of that; so Wilson was, and so the Americans were, to a certain extent. The point is this, and it is this point that establishes the fact given above: the United States was consistently honest in its attitude, and where its representative lost a point in the game, it was a point honestly lost, through the interested machinations of the powers, and never as a compromise for any advantage to the United States. America made no deals.

You will see what this all has to do with proverbs and epigrams soon.

President Wilson was, to all intents and purposes, the United States at the Peace Conference. You, like the rest of us, have read much and know little of what the Peace Conference actually was. Many books have been written about it. Dr. E. J. Dillon wrote one and a good one. Ray Stannard Baker wrote one. E. J. Keynes, the Englishman, wrote a difficult one. Thompson, of the Associated Press, wrote an intimate one. Professor Adams, of the University of Chicago, wrote a simple one. These five are by no means all. You can see them advertised in the magazines, and the magazines themselves published many fine articles on the Conference.

These books are mentioned as representing widely varied views. Dr. Dillon is British, conservative, but widely-read, well-informed, and shrewd. Baker is an entirely different type and an American. Keynes is not a philosophical historian like Dillon but a financial expert. Adams writes for students. Thompson is a newspaper man and tells a story of plain daily facts. Thompson naturally admires Wilson. Baker, from a different viewpoint, praises the President. Dillon, who analyzes him exhaustively, passes from admiration to—well, not quite derision but something just short of it. Keynes is merely critical. Adams is dealing with results and not personalities.

Now the fundamental fact on which all these and other writers are agreed, even unwillingly agreed, is the honesty of purpose and effort displayed by the President in Paris. Each tells the story from his own angle but each brings out, for example, the established fact that America, and America alone, fought for proper publicity for the Conference. Each brings out the fact, sometimes unconsciously, that whatever decision ultimate expediency made necessary, the American President approached every question from the standpoint of the Fourteen Points. True, the fact that each interested Ally interpreted the wording to suit itself often made it wholly impracticable to translate the ideal into action, but always, without exception, the President started from that point, and only yielded ground in the face of wholly irreconcilable European views and never for advantage to the United States.

That the President did yield is well known, and critical writers make the most of it. There was nothing else to do, unless the President was to assume the rôle of dictator of the world, and decree how each power should interpret his ideals to a standard.

Obviously, the intersecting lines of nationalities presented a most difficult problem, even without any extraneous complications; and when the Allied Powers aggravated these difficulties, as they did, for the sole purpose of muddying the waters of decision, the problem became practically insoluble.

Another important point to remember is this: every country had its experts in the field, but the American experts stood alone. They stood alone in every single detail relating to the European enemy powers, and led the Allied experts on all financial and economic questions. They did not lead but were led by the Allied experts in political matters; and there exactly is the line of division. The Allied premiers rested their ambitions on political factors, in which each one placed his own country's interests (not unnaturally) first. The American President rested his ambitions on an honest effort to do justice, and to that end his experts made a serious and successful effort at a fair appraisal of the enemy as well as friendly peoples of Central and Southeastern Europe.

The Allies out-maneuvered the American President frequently; their game was a common one to them all. And every one had an axe to grind at the expense of some one of the Wilsonian ideals. It was a common cause.

But the everlasting pride of American citizens is that the President lost worthy fights, while the European Allies' victories were by no means always worthy victories. In the final analysis, as seen clearly now in the reviews of the Conference, the stand of President Wilson, if not always right, was based invariably on an honest motive. And there is the crux of the present situation.

Look at Europe today and note the slender threads of friendship that bind together the blood allies of a few years ago. This is not said sneeringly. By no means. But isn't it obvious that when a half-dozen sharp card-players get through beating out the trusting stranger, and begin to play among themselves, they should be watchful and suspicious? It is so in Europe. Each power knows that all the other powers played their game against the Wilson ideals; each knows that the same tactics may be expected against itself. The only friendships in Europe today are those founded, not in love or respect, but in mutual self-interest.

So that whatever defeats American ideals met at the Peace Conference they have turned to victories after the Conference. The world listens intently when America speaks. Even when a strictly European dispute arises the rival powers come to an obvious pause, a questioning let-up, as if waiting to hear whether there is any advice coming from across the Atlantic. It is the fruit of America's consistent right thinking at the Peace Conference. Those dark experiences established the integrity of the nation.

Lloyd George is a bit of a wit; Clemenceau has a wickedly clever tongue. They coined epigrams that adorn every book on the Conference. America depended on proverbs.

**Honesty is the best policy.**